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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-5
*Foster Care	6
Adoption	7-10
*Juvenile Justice	11-12
Domestic Violence	13
Vulnerable Adults	14-15
Health Care	16-17
Food Assistance	18-20
Clothing Assistance	21-23
Homelessness	24-25
Charities	26-29
State Employees	30
Triangle Project	31-34

DETROIT

Baby's body burned in grill

Police discover bones in ceiling as parents are investigated in abuse of another child

November 26, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT and BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Two years ago, 1-year-old Deante Reid died in his parents' care -- and, to avoid funeral costs, his parents tried to cremate him in a barbecue grill, police say.

But the bones wouldn't burn completely, so police said the couple hid what was left of the baby in the ceiling of a home on Dickerson in Detroit.

Advertisement

The bizarre discovery turned up Friday as Detroit police investigated injuries to another 1-year-old boy, who turned out to be Deante's brother, police said.

The boys' parents -- Nickella Reid, 24, and Joseph Miller, 27 -- were arraigned Saturday in 36th District Court in Detroit on charges of first- and second-degree child abuse.

Police and prosecutors are weighing whether to add more charges in connection with the cremated baby.

Details of the 2-year-old death came to light Sunday as detectives continued to investigate the case.

The living 1-year-old suffered burns over one-third of his body. He is in fair condition, police said.

"The allegation is he was severely abused," said Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Maria Miller, who is not related to Joseph Miller.

Police said Reid told investigators that Miller, her boyfriend, scalded their son in the kitchen in their home on Lillibridge in Detroit, causing the burns.

Reid then told police of her previous son's death and directed them to Miller's sister's home on Lappin, but the sister directed them to a third house on Dickerson, where Deante's remains had been sealed in the ceiling.

The parents' explanations differ as to how Deante died, police said. An anthropologist will try to determine the cause of death based on the fragmented bones.

Reid is being held at the Wayne County Jail on a \$400,000 bond. Miller's bond on the child-abuse charges is \$700,000, but no bond was set on unrelated drug charges, so he won't be freed from jail.

The couple face a Dec. 4 court hearing. Miller is to appear today in Wayne County Circuit Court on the drug charges.

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Find this article at:<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071126/NEWS01/711260325>



Monday, November 26, 2007

Skeleton found in ceiling

Parents charged with abuse of baby, who's in hospital, as death of another child is investigated

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Deante Miller was barely a year old when he died nearly two years ago.

His parents were unable to afford a funeral, so his father tried to cremate him in a barbecue grill, his mother told police. When that didn't work, she said, her boyfriend hid Deante's remains in the ceiling of the home where his sister used to live on Detroit's east side.

On Sunday, police were investigating the case as a homicide.

Police said they made the gruesome discovery after Deante's mother, Nickella Reid, told a state child protective worker what happened to Deante while explaining how his 1-year-old brother suffered burns over 37 percent of his body on the day before Thanksgiving.

Reid, 24, and Joseph Miller, 27, were arraigned Saturday on first- and second-degree child abuse charges for injuries to the child, who is in fair condition at Children's Hospital of Michigan.

"The allegation is he was severely abused," said Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Maria Miller, who is not related to Joseph Miller.

No charges have been filed against the couple in connection with the death of Deante, who died in March 2006.

Reid told police Miller killed their son, but Miller said he died of natural causes. Reid also told police Miller scalded their other son, a charge he denied.

Miller and Reid were arrested Friday after Reid took her son to the hospital with burns he suffered from what she said was scalding water.

Hospital officials alerted state child protective workers. Reid told the state investigator that Miller scalded their son in the kitchen. During the interview, Reid broke down and said they also had another son, Deante, who died, Detroit police said. She then told interviewers about the cremation attempt and the remains in the ceiling.

Remains recovered

Police recovered Deante's skeletal remains in the ceiling of a home in the 2100 block of Dickerson, where Miller's sister no longer lives.

The remains were taken to the county morgue to determine the cause of death. Reid and Miller are being held in Wayne County Jail on \$400,000 and \$700,000 bonds, respectively.

A preliminary examination is set for Dec. 4.

Reid's four other children have been placed in the state foster care system.

Miller, who also uses the alias Anthony Taffies, is an absconder from probation since May 22, 2006, for a 2002 home invasion, records show.

He had been sentenced for five years in 2002.

He also has two previous drug convictions.

One of Reid's neighbors, Michelle McCoy, said she was shocked by the allegations.

"I thought she was always nice, and this is really surprising," McCoy said.

Reports encouraged

Jeanne Fowler, president of Big Family of Michigan, an advocacy organization for abused children, encouraged people to recognize child abuse and report it to authorities because Michigan residents can make anonymous reports of child abuse.

"If you do not report child abuse, a child dies," said Fowler. "That's a pretty high price. It's too high of a price."

Detroit News Staff Writer George Hunter and free-lance writer David G. Grant contributed to this report. You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

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Couple Await Charges In Child Death

POSTED: 12:49 pm EST November 24, 2007

UPDATED: 12:52 pm EST November 25, 2007

DETROIT -- What started out as a report of child abuse and unsanitary conditions in a home on Detroit's east side has turned into a homicide investigation.

Joseph Miller and Nikki Reed, of Lillibridge Street, were charged Saturday with burning their 1-year-old son while giving him a bath. But they are also under investigation in the death of one of their other children – a baby who relatives say had been missing for several months.

According to police, the remains of the baby were hidden in the ceiling of Miller's sister's basement on Lappin Street, about 5.5 miles away from his house, without her knowledge. Police reports also say that Miller had tried to burn the baby's remains on a barbecue grill.

Miller and Reed lived with their five sons, all under the age of 5. But for the last several months, relatives had been wondering about the whereabouts of one of their children. They were told he was with other relatives, but Miller's sister had doubts.

The sister, Tammy Johnson, said that she told relatives, "I'm getting the feeling that the baby is not alive."

Johnson said her brother recently stopped by to do laundry at her house. As part of investigation, police went to her home and found the body in the basement. It is unclear how long the remains were there.

A police investigation continues before a decision is made on whether to charge the couple in the death.

"It's my brother and I love him, but I'm trying to figure out what happened, what happened to your mind? What state of mind were you in to do this to your child?" Johnson said in an interview with Local 4.

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**Video: Police Find Baby Bones,
Burned Toddler Inside Of Home**

Council hopes it `maid' a difference with drive

Jackson Citizen Patriot

Monday, November 26, 2007

The Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect received a friendly hand from Molly Maid of Jackson.

During October, employees of the Jackson-based franchise participated in Ms. Molly Foundation's 10th annual ``Making a Difference Drive" to help domestic violence victims. Franchise owners Pat and Jim Stetler said nine employees helped collect \$355, as well as diapers, baby items and personal hygiene supplies for the council.

``Our customers and our employees play a very big part in the success of the annual drive," said Pat Stetler, who also chipped in an additional \$150 by donating 50 cents from each October cleaning appointment.

``I select this charity to receive our help every year because it's smaller and more of a learning center with classes to teach parenting," Stetler said. ``This is something we can do to try and help stop the vicious cycle of child abuse because if we don't try and do something about it, it will continue into the next generation."

Renee Ingraham, executive director of the council, said the donations go a long way.

``Donations of shampoos, conditioners, soaps and diapers may sound like little things, but they're huge when we can give them to kids and families struggling economically," Ingraham said.

``We've really been touched by Molly Maid's continued support -- they allow us to go a little bit beyond in some of the programs we offer."



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Published November 26, 2007

Republicans criticize state's foster care and child services system

Midday update

Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

House Republicans today blasted the state's system of protecting children in state custody and investigating the deaths of those under state care.

"We need to fix the system, it's obviously broken," said Rep. Paul Opsommer, R-DeWitt. Opsommer is one of six GOP representatives, along with Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge who sit on the task force.

Pointing to recent high-profile cases, like that of Ricky Holland, the group began its investigation of the state's foster care and child services system today with testimony from state Supreme Court Justice Maura Corrigan.

Holland's adoptive parents, Tim and Lisa Holland, are currently serving time in prison in connection with the boy's death.

"The phenomenon of children dying in state care is one that deserves special scrutiny," Corrigan said. "We know that there are many more deaths than made the newspapers."

For more on this story, check out Tuesday's Lansing State Journal.

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[\[Back\]](#)

ILE CAMERA

Finding family

Past adoption laws make it difficult

By Erika-Marie S. Geiss

Adoption touches 60 percent of all Americans and 25 percent of Michiganders. Dee Lindeman, 44, of Trenton is just one of many adoptees who has been affected by the policies from Michigan's era of closed adoption.

The closed adoption era was from May 28, 1945, through Sept. 12, 1980 — a 35-year time span when all adoptions in the state were sealed.

People adopted then still must struggle to get information about their heritage, including family medical history.

The closed adoption period also affects the lives of birth parents and parents who adopted, as well as the children themselves — a group called the adoption triad.

Most members of the adoption triad are unaware of their rights or the resources available to help them find their biological family members.

Lindeman is trying to change that.

She was born in Trenton, and learned that she was adopted when she was 4. Today, she is a married mother of five children of her own.

It was when she started having her own children that she wanted to have, at the very least, her family health history. She spent years wondering, and began searching in August 2006.

Last December, after many long delays, Detroit Baptist Children's Hospital (now the Judson Center), the adoption agency that had placed her, released non-identifying information to her about her biological family.

With that in hand, she was able to piece together enough clues to start an active search for her birth mother. She also learned that she had two older brothers.

Lindeman said she "searched all over the Downriver area, going to libraries, seeking clues and history."

In October, she was at last able to get contact information for a woman she thought was her biological mother.

The next day, she made the phone call, and after a few gentle questions, identified herself to the woman who had given birth to her.

The reaction was all she envisioned.

"Within the first 15 minutes of the conversation, she wanted to know when we could meet," Lindeman said. "The conversation was excellent, better than I could ever hope for.

"I spent seven years preparing for it, and once I had her on the phone and she wasn't hanging up on me, I knew that it would be good.

"There were a lot of questions and answers, and one of the first things she said to me was, 'You have no idea; I have thought about you every day.'"

Lindeman learned that her mother, in her seventh month of pregnancy, had gone to stay with a relative and stayed away from home — and her two little boys — until the adoption was finalized.

The mother and daughter met in person a few days later. The reunion after 44 years was more successful than Lindeman ever thought possible.

She has since been able to meet one of her older brothers.

His initial reaction?

"Well, are you just going to stand there or are you going to give your big brother a hug?"

Her other brother lives out of state, so she hasn't had a chance to meet him yet. But Lindeman is certain that she and her biological family will stay connected now.

One of the tough questions she asked her mother was if she had ever tried to find the baby girl she had given up.

"I didn't know where to start," her mother said.

Now Lindeman is committed to changing Michigan adoption law and helping others like her reach their goals.

She went to Lansing recently to work on having legislation drafted to improve the process for those affected by the closed adoption era, which saw the highest rates of adoption in the nation with 55,000 children adopted in 1945, peaking at 173,000 in 1970.

Through Lindeman's efforts, two bills in support of open records have been placed before the state House of Representatives and the Senate to change the law regarding the ability for people to obtain their original birth certificates.

Senate Bill 0592 has been referred to the Committee on Families and Human Services and House Bill 4896 has been referred to the Committee on Family and Children's Services.

This month — National Adoption Awareness Month — testimony is expected to be heard for both measures.

"It is also very important for members of the adoption triad to know about the resources available," Lindeman said.

These resources include the Central Adoption Agency, probate courts, adoption agencies and counties where the adoptions occurred, the American Adoption Congress, the National Council for Adoption, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the monthly meeting of adoption agencies in Lansing and the International Soundex Reunion Registry.

Currently, according to the Department of Human Services, Michigan adoption law requires that adoption agencies, the Family Independence Agency and the probate courts maintain and release non-identifying information from adoption records to the adult adopted person, adoptive parents of a minor, biological parents and adult biological siblings.

But identifying information can only be released if the biological parent had signed a statement of consent, and the absence of a Central Adoption Registry statement equals denial of permission to release those records.

Original birth certificates can only be issued to the adult adopted person. Because of these and other roadblocks, few from the closed adoption era get as far as Lindeman has, and the problems can be manifold.

For one thing, new birth certificates are issued when a child is adopted, and because it can take up to a year for an adoption to be finalized, there is a discrepancy in information. In the post Sept. 11, 2001, era, when people must be able to prove their identity in many situations, that can cause significant problems.

Lindeman's original birth certificate is 14 months older than her adoptive birth certificate.

Also, many birth parents do not know that it is OK to search for their children who have been adopted by someone else. Like Lindeman's biological mother, they don't know where to start.

Many fear they will be intruding, and many of the mothers still suffer from the social stigma and mores of the era when they gave birth, often as unmarried parents.

Most sources for adoption information are passive registries, which means two or more members of the adoption triad must submit their information in order to be matched with the other parties.

The state does nothing to publicize the various registries and other resources available to members of the adoption triad, Lindeman said.

She was one of the lucky ones. Many more like her have been searching for years or want to search but know neither how nor where to start.

Lindeman said there are five key things people can do to improve the chances of finding biological family members:

- †Get non-identifying information from the agency or court where the adoption was finalized. They also can obtain it from the probate court of the county where the adoption took place.
- †Register on every adoption database possible, such as the International Soundex Reunion Registry, and "avoid the ones that cost money," Lindeman said.

"If you spend any money, it is better to spend \$300 for a confidential intermediary," she said.

- †"Join a support group in your area or an online group such as www.michigansearching.com, which boasts 2,000 members," Lindeman said. "You will learn from others and find a community of people in similar situations."

- †Be prepared for all possibilities, including rejection and deceased parents or siblings, Lindeman said.

"A lot of people go into it expecting different results from the ones that they get," she said. "You really have to be prepared, and that's also part of where joining a support group helps."

- †Keep trying and don't give up, is her final advice.

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Cheers

-- To the 13 families who adopted a total of 19 children last week to offer them new lives and the security and home life children need to thrive. The event was part of a national public relations push that saw more than 30 adoptions finalized in Michigan. Over the past five years, 13,000 Michigan children have been adopted out of foster care, officials said.



Justices decline to hear appeal from Michigan faith-based program

11/26/2007, 10:35 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday declined to get involved in a dispute between Michigan officials and a faith-based program for troubled youths.

The Michigan Family Independence Agency imposed a moratorium on Teen Ranch Inc. from participating in a government-financed program for abused, neglected and delinquent children, saying the ranch coerced the 11- to 17-year-olds into religious activities.

Teen Ranch denies that it forced the young people to attend religious services, saying that it offers alternatives such as academic study time, writing letters home and recreational time in a gymnasium.

In asking the justices to take the case, lawyers for Teen Ranch say the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati incorrectly expanded a 2003 Supreme Court ruling to cover Teen Ranch. In the four-year-old ruling, the Supreme Court barred state scholarships for students studying to enter the clergy.

The appeals court decision enables bureaucrats "to discriminate against religious organizations at will," lawyers for Teen Ranch said in asking the justices to take the case.

The case is Teen Ranch v. Udow, 07-362.

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Congress should fix juvenile justice

Monday, November 26, 2007

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 created a far-sighted partnership between the federal government and the states that agreed to remake often barbaric juvenile justice systems in exchange for federal aid. Unfortunately, those gains have been steadily rolled back since the 1990s when states began sending ever larger numbers of juveniles to adult jails - where they face a high risk of being battered, raped or pushed to suicide. The act is due to be reauthorized this year, and Congress needs to reverse this destructive trend.

As incredible as it seems, many states regard a child as young as 10 as competent to stand trial in juvenile court. More than 40 states regard children as young as 14 as "of age" and old enough to stand trial in adult court. The scope of the problem is laid out in a new report titled "Jailing Juveniles" from the Campaign for Youth Justice, an advocacy group based in Washington. Statistics are notoriously hard to get, but perhaps as many as 150,000 young people under the age of 18 are incarcerated in adult jails in any given year.

As many as half of the young people who are transferred to the adult system are never convicted as adults.

Some jails try to protect young inmates by placing them in isolation, where they are locked in small cells for 23 hours a day. This worsens mental disorders. Studies show that they are far more likely to commit violent crimes - and to end up back inside - than those who are handled through the juvenile courts.

The rush to criminalize children has set the country on a dangerous path. Congress must now reshape the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act so that it provides the states with the money and the expertise they need to develop more enlightened juvenile justice policies. For starters, it should rewrite the law to prohibit the confinement of children in adult jails.

The New York Times

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ClickOnDetroit.com

Detroit EMT Kills Wife, Self

POSTED: 1:49 pm EST November 25, 2007
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DETROIT -- A Detroit emergency medical technician who shot and killed his wife and wounded his 9-year-old son on Detroit's east side Saturday was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound Sunday morning, police said.

Police said that Anthony Gibson, 41, of Sterling Heights, fired shots into his wife's car on Kelly Road near Saratoga Street on Saturday, killing her. Bullet fragments also struck the couple's 9-year-old son in the stomach, but he is expected to recover.

Police reports said that the wife, Ladora Gibson, had been staying with relatives following domestic disputes.

After the incident, Anthony Gibson had been contacting coworkers, telling them that he intended to commit suicide.

Gibson's body was found Sunday morning inside a vehicle parked on Rivard Street and Jefferson Avenue.

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Published November 23, 2007

Alert system

- House Bill 4819 would set up a senior alert system for finding seniors who wander off. Information is available at www.michiganlegislature.org.

Meadows proposes Amber Alert for elderly

Senior Medical Alert would create uniform system across state

Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

When Robert Howell's wife, who has Alzheimer's disease, wandered off at a Michigan State University football game, police fanned out, television stations were notified and stories were aired about her disappearance.

Within a couple of hours, police found her on the other side of Grand River Avenue; the saga ended well. State Rep. Mark Meadows, D-East Lansing, wants to make that the protocol statewide.

Meadows has introduced legislation creating a Senior Medical Alert system for finding missing senior citizens who are incapable of returning home without assistance.

The system would be much like the Amber Alert system for missing children.

"I think a system like that would be very helpful," said Howell, an East Lansing resident.

"As a practical matter, I'm not sure how that's different from what's already out there."

Meadows said that while East Lansing responds quickly, there are inconsistent standards throughout the state.

Some police agencies, he said, will wait until someone is missing for 24 or 48 hours before putting out an alert.

At least six other states have senior alert programs, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Under Meadows' legislation, police agencies receiving notice of a missing senior would be required to prepare a report within five hours and distribute it to other law enforcement agencies in the area.

They also would request that media outlets broadcast or publish information about the missing senior.

Meadows said the system is likely to be used more often than the one for missing children.

"Obviously, we've got an aging population, and we're going to see more and more dementia as time goes on," he said.

His bill passed the House last month and is in the Senate.

Ingham County Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth said the legislation is a good idea.

"We have, from time to time, people who are in nursing homes or sometimes in their own home and they wander away," Wriggelsworth said.

"This would be a great tool to help deal with that. Quite frankly, I don't know why we didn't think of this a long time ago."

John Vielbig of East Lansing, a volunteer caregiver for Alzheimer's patients, said some mechanisms already are in place for finding missing seniors, including ID bracelets, but that Meadows' legislation could help out.

Lt. Bruce Ferguson, spokesman for the Lansing Police Department, said the department typically phones neighbors, conducts searches and contacts the media when a senior is reported missing.

Ferguson said he wasn't sure of the need for legislation.

The bill does have the support of the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and the Alzheimer's Association.

Meadows said he hopes the Senate will take up the measure by the end of the year.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or candrews@lsj.com.

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[\[Back\]](#)



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Published November 22, 2007

Dr. Susan Dorr Goold

is an associate professor and director of the Bioethics Program at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Susan Dorr Goold: America should be tired of injustice in health care

This isn't about tweaks, but basic changes for equity

I'm angry. Why? Because, as a physician, how I can help one patient differs so dramatically from how I can help another.

Patient A wants a specialty referral for a minor problem. He's unwilling to allow his internist to try anything first.

Patient B wants a medication she saw on TV; I think she'd do just as well with a cheaper alternative.

Patient C tried to commit suicide last year. When the bills for therapy get too high, he goes longer between treatments and his depression worsens.

Patient D has a breast lump so large and irregular we barely need tissue to diagnose her cancer. She's 64 - and waiting until she qualified for Medicare to see a doctor.

These patients are not alone. Fears of financial ruin, embarrassment at turning to charity or perception of worse treatment keep many uninsured patients away.

The Institute of Medicine reported 18,000 premature deaths a year due to a lack of insurance.

The numbers make eyes glaze over and readers turn to a more interesting story. When one of my patients will contribute to those deaths, the impersonal becomes personal.

You know these people. They lack insurance because they work part-time, care for children or parents, have been laid off or, ironically, because illness keeps them from working. Others serve you lunch, care for your children, cut your hair, deliver your newspaper or started their own businesses.

Health insurance often depends less on whether or how you work and more on what kind of business employs you. One woman I know works just enough to keep her health insurance while she fights cancer, fitting chemotherapy around her work schedule.

If we, as a society, want to provide health care only to those who have earned it, presumably all workers, not just those who work for certain employers, would qualify. If we want to provide health care according to need, then employment and wealth should be irrelevant. Whatever your

conception of justice, the status quo fails: 1.2 of the 1.3 million American adults who joined the ranks of the uninsured in 2005-6 worked full time.

People without employer-provided insurance choose rent over insurance, crossing fingers that they will stay healthy. Some don't.

I see the connection between expensive care for insured patients and insurance affordability for my patients C & D, and I struggle to convince patients A & B that what they want isn't what they need. While practicing prudently conserves money in the system, in the short term it benefits insurers, who enjoy little sympathy. Appeals to professional integrity and avoiding waste generate quizzical looks in this consumer-directed age of health care.

No tweaks will fix our badly broken health system. Access to adequate health care needs to be disconnected from employment and from one's material standing.

Our values - and our economy - demand it.

I'm tired of living and practicing medicine in a community, a state and a nation that allow and enable this injustice. I've seen more than the numbers - I've seen their faces.

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[\[Back\]](#)



— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

Food banks find demand way up

Number of people seeking help has doubled or tripled since last year, agencies say

Sunday, November 25, 2007

BY JORDAN MILLER

The Ann Arbor News

Pallets of turkeys, cartons of potatoes, and shelves of boxed stuffing were ready to go at Food Gatherers on Tuesday, as local charities came to shop and delivery trucks headed out for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Local food banks and charities are reporting a rising demand for food. Although they're able to meet the needs in the community, food stores are going quickly, causing them to stretch their resources and ask for more help.

"It's becoming much more challenging," said Marti Lachapell, Food Gatherers' director of agency relations. "Sites that were serving 20 families are serving 40 now. We're doubling, tripling in some cases to the point where we're having to talk to congregations about how to continue to serve the people they're serving, because the numbers are going up and the resources really aren't."

Food Gatherers provides enough food to serve more than 7,700 meals per day, and this time of year is good for bringing in supplies, said President and CEO Eileen Spring.

"At this time of year, people start to think of people less fortunate than them," she said. "So we're the beneficiary of a lot of food drives."

Spring pointed out boxes of potatoes, part of a 25,000-pound donation recently given by a church in Saline. She said they're anticipating "orphan turkeys" that will start to come in over the next few days from people who received them as gifts, which Food Gatherers will freeze and use for Christmas and throughout the year.

Kimberly Green, who runs the emergency food bank for Catholic Social Services, was at Food Gatherers on

Tuesday shopping for the

family food bags her organization provides throughout the year.

"Demand has increased tremendously, at least double from last year," Green said, picking up a giant bag of Halloween candy. "But we try to get extra stuff for the food bags. It's nice for the families to have extras other than what we order."

At the SOS Crisis Center food bank in Ypsilanti, there was a nearly three-hour line out the door Tuesday, and 360 people were served last Tuesday and Wednesday, said community relations coordinator Angela Martin-Barcelona. That's an increase from last year - a trend at the food bank that Martin-Barcelona attributed to the current economic environment in Michigan.

To cope with the increased need, SOS recently installed a larger cooler to store more perishable items. They've also stepped up their collection efforts.

"The support that we've been getting with holiday drop boxes and food drives has really helped," Martin-Barcelona said. "It's something we're encouraging people to do, because we're very much in need of it."

Jordan Miller can be reached at jmiller@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6679.

11/26/2007

Hunters can donate deer meat to food pantry

By Julie Ann Williamson

As part of a continuing effort between the Midland County Emergency Food Pantry Network, Robert McKellar and Kessler's Deer Processing in Hemlock, hunters can donate deer to needy families through the Venison Program.

According to Jean Kellom, executive director of the Food Pantry Network, McKellar started the partnership with the agency and the Kesslers as a way to encourage local hunters to help the hungry.

"I am on the food pantry board and have been for several years now, and the Venison Program is just another way we can get our hands on relatively inexpensive food and distribute it to help feed others. The program also takes advantage of those who enjoy deer hunting but who don't use their venison," McKellar said.

"We wanted to find the least expensive and most direct route to get food to people that need it," he said, adding that the only requirement is that deer be processed by a licensed processor.

Kellom said selected hunters already were participating in a similar program at the Chippewa Nature Center, a nonprofit agency required by the state to donate all the deer hunted there. For the past several years, the CNC has used the Kesslers' services to process the deer harvested at the nature center.

When asked if they could take on McKellar's brainchild and process additional deer from area hunters, Jack and Shelly Kessler didn't hesitate. For the couple, combining charitable work with the meat business has been a family affair for years.

The couple started their business in Hemlock about five years ago, Jack Kessler said. He learned meat cutting from his father, Joseph Kessler, who owned Kessler's Market in Saginaw for 44 years.

Working at a reduced rate paid by the EFNP, the couple processes, grinds

and bags the donated venison in 1- to 11/2-pound packages, often later used for venison burgers.

McKellar said he turned in 600 to 700 pounds of deer meat to the Kesslers for processing last year. "You get about 60 pounds out of one deer," he said. That means about 10 deer harvested by local hunters were given back to the community in 2006.

"It takes us about an hour to an hour and a half to get through one complete deer from start to finish," Shelly Kessler said. "During hunting season we sometimes work 20 hours a day, seven days a week."

After the Kesslers have accumulated 60 to 70 pounds of packaged venison, they call the EFPN, which picks up the meat for distribution to Midland County food pantries.

Jack Kessler says he wishes he could do one quarter of what his father, Joseph, who passed away Oct. 9, did to help those in need.

"He was a great man who always gave to the needy," Jack Kessler said. "You could always count on my dad to have a kettle of stew or a pot of bean soup ready for the hungry. He always believed in helping others."

To donate a deer, call Robert McKellar at (989) 835-9601 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Messages will be returned. Before arranging a pickup, field dress the deer and hang it in a cool place.

Deer can be dropped off at McKellar IP Law, 784 S. Poseyville Road, where there is a large freezer for storage, or at Kessler's Deer Processing in Hemlock. Jack and Shelly Kessler can be reached at (989) 642-4962. Please notify McKellar before dropping off a deer at either location.

Midland County EFPN representatives are available to pick up and deliver dressed deer. For information on the network, call Kellom at (989) 832-3457.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Warm the Children a winterlong hug Volunteer to be busier than ever

Sunday, November 25, 2007

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

The Ann Arbor News

There's just something about kids that pulls at Melissa Buie.

She has three of her own - Matthew, 26, Ryan, 10 and Amanda, 7.

And she works with children as a paraprofessional at Paddock Elementary School in Milan, spending mornings helping an autistic child in his mainstream class and the afternoon helping another.

During recess at school, Buie (pronounced BOO-ee) keeps an extra pair of gloves in her pocket for children who don't have any.

Last year, Buie read about The Ann Arbor News' Warm the Children program and the role of volunteers. They help families who can't afford warm clothes for their children by shopping with them for \$90 in new coats, hats, boots and other clothing using money donated by Ann Arbor News readers.

Buie, 45, can't really afford to give much away herself. But time, she reasoned, she's got. And heart - lots of it.

After she shopped with three families at Meijer last year, Buie wrote The News a letter.

The effort, she wrote, "made my heart sing."

And she was just warming up. In that letter, she asked Warm the Children to match her with two or three families every week of the program this year - as many we could give her.

"Knowing these might be the only new things they get," she said of children in the program, "it's like putting a hug on them for the whole winter."

Last year, Buie sat with a 5-year-old girl while her mother did the shopping for her infant. The girl, who took her lunch to school in a grocery bag, asked her mother if she could get a lunch box, like the other kids. Her mother said they just couldn't afford it.

"I couldn't let her walk out of there without a lunch box," Buie said.

On another trip, a mother of three boys told Buie one of the boys might not speak because he's autistic. That was a match made in heaven.

While the mom shopped, Buie spent time racing around the store with the ecstatic first-grader. Then she gave the mother tips for dealing with some of her son's difficult moments - how to wrap him up firmly when he needs comfort and how to fill a sock with rice, heat it in the microwave, and put it around his shoulders when that might help.

Buie's children were too young to go along on the shopping trips last year, but she said she hopes to take them along on future trips.

Already, she said, they quiz her when she gets home. Did she take girls or boys? How old were they? Her

kids want to know because they identify with the other children.

Her kids unearth toys they've outgrown and donate them to local churches and daycare centers.

Buie's got a few tips for other Warm the Children volunteer shoppers.

She's learned to scan every price before she gets to the register because items are often on sale. That way, she can squeeze every penny out of the \$90 available for each child.

She urges families to pick up an extra pair of gloves, a hat, underwear or socks - in case there's an extra dollar or three left on the tab.

"I don't have much myself, but I can freely give of my time, and would give more if I could," Buie said. "Everybody's busy. But there is never too much to do for a child."

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or 734-482-1166.

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Dedicated stitchers keeping kids warm

Sunday, November 25, 2007

By Aaron Ogg

The Grand Rapids Press

Martha Smits was not about to let her friend's yarn go to waste.

Smits' friend, Sadie Harkema-Bajema, died in May at age 87. She left behind several boxes of yarn and embroidery thread that was given to their former church, Bethany United Reformed, 5401 Byron Center Ave. SW.

The church didn't know what to do with it, so they gave it to Smits, who knew exactly what to do with it.

The 90-year-old Wyoming woman crocheted 500 hats for Santa Claus Girls, the Press-sponsored charity that raises money for gifts for needy children ages 6 months to 12 years.

For about a month and a half, Smits dug in at about 6:30 a.m. every day.

"I can do best in the morning," she said. "I just have to keep busy. Otherwise I just sit here and twiddle my thumbs, and I don't like to do that.

"I just feel like it's something that's needed very badly."

Smits isn't the only one keeping little heads warm this year.

The mother-daughter team of Belmont resident Sandy Hamblin and her mother, 59-year-old Irene Hanson, have cranked out 625 hats for Santa Claus Girls since last year.

"My mom was whizzing right through them," Hamblin said.

And Cedar Springs resident Jane Huff, 52, formed a knitting group at work. An employee of the Rockford Housing Commission, she cleans the Rogue Valley Towers and recruited women who live in the senior apartments. Huff's group has pieced together more than 200 hats.

"I've worked in schools for recess, and it hurts me when kids don't have hats and gloves just to keep them warm," Huff said.

Send e-mail to the author: localnews@grpress.com

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Homeless advocates lay out plan, give glimpse of building

Coalition details six major goals

By Christy Strawser
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A virtual version of the county's first safe haven for the homeless and mentally ill was revealed at a meeting where a regional coalition of advocates also laid out their 10-year plan to end homelessness in Macomb County.

The plan to eradicate homelessness was created by 70 stakeholders in Macomb, including politicians, parents, business owners and some of the homeless themselves.

It has six major goals: promoting an understanding of homelessness; addressing community barriers; increasing housing stock; performing street outreach to the homeless; educating the community about preventing relapses into homelessness; and engaging local decision makers in the process.

Carrie Fortune, continuum of care coordinator for Macomb County Community Services Agency, said she will give the audience time to spend Christmas with their families.

And then everyone has to get to work.

"We'll roll up our sleeves in January," Fortune said.

After discussion of the 10-year plan, ticket-holders for the Macomb Homeless Coalition annual dinner at Sycamore Hills Golf Club got a virtual walk-through of a \$3.2 million multipurpose building to serve the homeless. It's planned for property owned by the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team on Little Mack, just north of Interstate 94, in Roseville.

The facility is named "Jack's Place" in honor of the brother of Jimetta Lewis, executive director of the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team, or MCREST, in Roseville.

After suffering with mental illness for years, Lewis' brother killed himself in 1983 by carbon monoxide poisoning. He was found with his hand resting on the door of the garage where he had trapped himself, trying at the end to save his life.

"We knew there was some hope there, but it was a little too late," Lewis said.

To make sure it's not too late for others, Lewis unveiled plans for the building that would offer a variety of services under one roof, including a commercial kitchen to serve free meals, medical and dental clinics, mental health services, and branches of the Department of Human Services, the veteran's association, Michigan Works, and more.

The center would offer job training, legal aid and substance abuse counseling. If approved, it would be funded with grants and construction would start in March.

The building is pie-shaped with rows of offices on the outside surrounding a central drop-in center and kitchen.

"I may sound calm, but I'm so excited I can't stand it," said Lewis as she led about 200 people through the virtual tour of the facility.

The second floor of the 12,000-square-foot building would have one of only two safe havens in the state. The 25-bed facility would house men with severe mental illness with the goal of stabilizing them through two years of intense treatment.

The upstairs has simple individual sleeping rooms with desks; the rooms flank a library and meeting room. The basement would have a conference center, classrooms and storage for medical volunteers.

Roseville's Planning Commission must approve the plan before it is put before the City Council for final consideration. The plan is set for a public hearing Dec. 17.

"We all know how to work together," Lewis said. "We believe in this."

Local shelters have only 157 beds while Macomb County has 1,142 chronically homeless people and up to 3,500 a year who periodically have no place to stay, according to the Macomb County Continuum of Care. The numbers climbed from 899 in 2004 and 947 in 2005.

"Statistics are great for shock value, for grants, and as a way to distance yourself -- the fact is every single homeless person is a person," Fortune said.

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/112607/loc_homeless001.shtml



State charities feel squeeze

Sunday, November 25, 2007

By Pat Shellenbarger

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- While walking his dog the other day near Fuller Avenue and Knapp Street in northeast Grand Rapids, John Arnold noticed a man head down inside a Dumpster behind a pizza parlor.

When the man popped up, he had a slice of pizza in his mouth.

The neighborhood is hardly a poverty-stricken one, but the sight came as no surprise to Arnold, executive director of Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan. He and the heads of other area charities serving the poor have noticed a dramatic increase in demand for services this year, a reflection of the state's weak economy.

"When people are eating out of Dumpsters at Fuller and Knapp," he said, "we've got a problem."

Several Michigan charities are finding it difficult to keep pace with the demand for food and other emergency assistance, according to a survey last month by GuideStar, a national firm that researches nonprofit organizations.

Sixty-nine percent of the 136 responding Michigan charities reported an increased demand for services, while only 3 percent reported a decrease. Demand remained about the same at the rest.

Many of the charities find themselves caught between the increased demand and decreased contributions that are typical when the economy goes bad. Financial donations increased at 52 percent of the charities, decreased at 22 percent and stayed about the same at the others, the GuideStar survey found.

Until this year, In the Image, a charity that gives clothing and furniture to the needy, never had trouble collecting enough used clothing to meet demand, said Paul Haagsman, the agency's executive director.

A year ago, In the Image averaged 325 shoppers each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, when its store at 1823 S. Division Ave. was open to give away clothing. In recent months, it has averaged about 400 shoppers each day.

"Every time we think we've reached equilibrium, we see more people on our doorstep," Haagsman said.

The trends in Michigan mirror those in many other states, according to the GuideStar survey, but are considerably magnified by this state's weaker economy. Michigan has been saddled with the nation's highest unemployment rate for much of 2007. It's October jobless rate of 7.7 percent was the highest since 1992 and well above the national average of 4.7 percent.

U.S. Census figures show that 18.8 percent of families in the city of Grand Rapids, and 33.1 percent of children, are living below federal poverty guidelines.

"That's a lot of kids who need winter coats," Haagsman said.

Some of those arriving at In the Image are the recently unemployed or those caught in foreclosures due to the subprime mortgage crisis, Haagsman said.

"My initial reaction is, 'Oh, they're here to donate,'" he said, but then he realizes they have come to receive

free clothing. "You start to see the perniciousness of poverty creeping up."

At Second Harvest Gleaners, Arnold noticed the same trend.

"We are finding more and more people coming in sort of shell shocked and saying, 'I never thought I'd be in this situation,'" he said. "More and more of those seeking food aid are people who through most of their lives were middle class."

This year, Second Harvest expects to distribute about a million more pounds than it did last year, an increase of 7 to 8 percent. Most of it goes out through some 1,200 food pantries, homeless shelters and soup kitchens in the 40 West and Northern Michigan counties served by Gleaners.

One of those outlets, God's Kitchen, has not seen an increase in the number of free meals it serves seven days a week at its South Division Avenue soup kitchen, director Rob Miller said, but that's because most of its customers live within walking distance in the low-income Heartside neighborhood.

Out in the suburbs, the need is increasing, Miller said, and God's Kitchen plans to begin offering free meals in cooperation with churches in Wyoming and Kentwood.

God's Kitchen, a program of Catholic Charities West Michigan, already serves about 300 meals a day at its soup kitchen and another 300 through its Meals on Wheels program.

"It's not just a single entity like God's Kitchen, but the total community that can solve some of these problems," Miller said.

"We're all trying to tackle the whole issue of hunger in the community."

-- The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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Motorcycle club holds fund drive for the needy

By John Michalak
Daily Tribune Staff Writer

MADISON HEIGHTS – They may exude a hostile, menacing image, but these men with nicknames like "T-Bone," "Reptile," "Pharaoh" and "Bubba" are engaged in a holiday project that's warm, fuzzy and needed.

The men – Chuck "T-Bone" Thorpe, 50; Rex "Reptile" Lyle, 51; Dan "Pharaoh" Scott, 26; Craig "Bubba" Shaw, 39; and Rick Patria, 56 – are among 30 members of the Fourth Reich Motorcycle Club with a clubhouse at 702 W. 11 Mile in Madison Heights.

The club will hold a charity drive on three successive weekends from noon to 4 p.m. starting Dec. 1 and 2 collecting canned goods, new toys, new and clean used coats, hats, mittens and boots for the needy.

A biker Santa probably smoking a cigar will be at the club's drop-off center with other members to accept the holiday gifts. Patria said most donations, along with any cash, will go to the Madison Heights Goodfellows. Used items will go to other charities, he said.

Charity work is not new for this unlikely bunch whose common connection is Harley-Davidson and cruiser style motorcycles.

"We really have a long history of doing charity work," said Shaw, the club's president. "In the '70s a member's family had a Christmas tree farm. We sold the trees out back (of the clubhouse) and gave a portion of the proceeds to charity. Just before Christmas we donated trees to less fortunate families."

Shaw added, "We've donated turkeys at Thanksgiving. We've been involved in the Madison Heights Afterglow Car Show for four years. The Madison Heights Goodfellows sent us letters and we pass the hat. We've also collected canned goods for the veterans. This is something we do to give back to the community."

Club member Rick Patria chairs the fundraiser which he said is a continuation of a project last year in Lapeer where 400 coats were collected for a church.

"We didn't set a goal for this fundraiser," said Patria, a retired truck driver for General Motors whose married with two children and will participate in the charity drive. "But we'll be doing it for six days and hopefully will get 400-500 items."

The Fourth Reich Motorcycle Club formed in 1967 and located the clubhouse on 11 Mile in 1972.

"Members come from all walks of life and we are family-oriented," said Shaw, a laid-off machinist and motorcycle mechanic. "One is an owner of an engineering firm. Others are factory workers and once we had a lawyer. The key ingredient is motorcycles. Everybody rides a Harley or cruiser style motorcycle."

Madison Heights Police Sgt. Ronald Hillman said the club hasn't given the department problems.

"Most are just guys who like to ride bikes," Hillman said. "They don't call us. But we're not aware of any problems with their neighbors."

Decades ago the club was the site of a slaying when one member shot another.

While the term "Fourth Reich" has been associated with neo-Nazis and by groups to suggest the resurrection of Hitler's Third Reich, Shaw and other club members disavow that connection.

Shaw said the club isn't neo-Nazi. The name Fourth Reich, like Hell's Angels, the Renegades or most any other biker group, was "intended to strike fear in people," he said.

"One of the guys who helped name the club was Jewish," said Shaw, adding the club is "pretty diversified."

"The club was originally called The Drifters in the '60s. But there was another club called The Drifters and we were told we couldn't use it."

Members will set up a banner and tent for the collections on Dec. 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 and 16. Members will be on hand to take donations at a drive-up, drop-off site, Shaw said.

Contact John Michalak at john.michalak@dailytribune.com or (248) 591-2521.

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http://www.dailytribune.com/stories/112607/loc_reich001.shtml

November 23, 2007

Michigan Broadens Discrimination Protections

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANSING, Mich., Nov. 22 (AP) — Gov. [Jennifer M. Granholm](#) has issued an order that bars discrimination against state workers based on their “gender identity or expression,” which protects the rights of those who behave, dress or identify as members of the opposite sex.

The order, which Ms. Granholm, a Democrat, signed Wednesday, adds gender identity to a list of other prohibited grounds for discrimination that includes religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, height, weight, marital status, politics, disability or genetic information.

“State employment practices and procedures that encourage nondiscriminatory and equal employment practices provide desirable models for the private sector and local governments,” the resolution says.

The Triangle Foundation, a [Michigan](#) group advocating rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, praised Ms. Granholm’s action.

“Coming out as transgender is a career-ender,” the foundation’s policy director, Sean Kosofsky, told The Detroit Free Press. “Transgendered people lose their jobs all the time.”

James Muffet, president of Citizens for Traditional Values, expressed doubt about the seriousness of sexual identity discrimination in state government. Mr. Muffet said Ms. Granholm was more likely making a political gesture toward gay rights groups that backed her 2006 re-election bid.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published November 25, 2007

Highlights

The new state police headquarters won't bring all operations under one roof, but it will significantly consolidate the department. Coming downtown will be:

- 255 employees from the Harrison Road headquarters
- 132 workers from the Collins Road facility who work in the Office of Highway Safety, the investigative unit and the Motor Vehicle Division
- 132 people from the Criminal Justice Information Center now in the General Office Building at the State Secondary Complex
- 43 people from the training academy and State Police lab at the State Secondary Complex

Other plans

A new emergency operations center is planned for the State Secondary Complex. Officials say it should be separate from the headquarters for security reasons. The State Police warehouse, now at the Harrison Road site, will move to the State Secondary Complex.

Source: Department of Management and Budget

Criticism of new State Police HQ increasing

Lawmaker calls \$39M project 'bad use of tax dollars'

Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

It is supposedly a done deal.

Developer Gary Granger says he and partner Joel Ferguson are three months into a 21-month project that will create hundreds of construction jobs and a state-of-the-art Michigan State Police headquarters.

And yet?

The drumbeat of criticism has been getting louder since the contract won final state approval in August. Efforts to undo the deed intensify.

A cozy deal for politically connected developers, the critics complain on talk radio, in letters to editors and e-mails to lawmakers. A waste of money. The wrong place at the wrong time.

"This is a bad use of tax dollars," said Rep. Rick Jones, a Grand Ledge Republican who has

introduced legislation to block it. "This whole thing just disgusts me."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration stands steadfast behind the project.

Officials say it will create 540 much-needed construction jobs, boost downtown Lansing by bringing 560 permanent employees to the new headquarters and consolidate many of the State Police operations.

Tough budget times? Sure, but that's no reason to stop investing, said Department of Management and Budget spokesman Edward Woods III.

"This is the time where you invest in terms of providing jobs for the construction industry," Woods said. "In the end, it's going to be a win-win situation for everyone."

In August, the state finalized the lease agreement with Granger and Ferguson. They are to build a 148,000-square-foot, \$39 million office building at the corner of Kalamazoo Street and Grand Avenue. It's a prime piece of real estate that Lansing officials have been looking to develop for years.

The offices will be filled by State Police personnel now working at the Harrison Road headquarters in East Lansing and buildings on Collins Road in Lansing and the State Secondary Complex in Windsor Township.

A new emergency operations center is expected to be built at the State Secondary Complex. Officials believe it should be located away from the headquarters for security reasons.

The state has entered into a 25-year lease agreement at \$24.90 per square foot, resulting in an annual cost of \$3.7 million. The state has the option to buy the building at the end of the lease for \$1.

The Joint Capital Outlay Committee - which provides final legislative approval - OK'd the project 14-3, with three lawmakers abstaining.

Charges of favoritism

The bipartisan approval hasn't silenced the critics.

For starters, they object to the fact that no bids were sought for the project and that other sites weren't considered. They note that Ferguson is a major Democratic player and donor, while Granger is a big benefactor to Republican campaigns.

Jones said another developer told him he could have done it for substantially less.

But Woods said two marketing analyses showed the state was paying a fair market rate.

Ferguson said the deal requires developers to bid out the work, eat any cost overruns and pass on any savings to the state.

"How can that be a sweetheart deal?" he said.

Jones said that by playing both sides of the aisle, the developers have been able to secure bipartisan support.

Granger dismisses the idea that the project is in any way an act of political payback or favoritism.

"We are just a couple of quality developers trying to do a quality job," he said. "There are a lot of other deals that we don't get."

He cited the Cadillac Place project in Detroit and Constitution Hall in Lansing.

Cost comparison

Critics have seized on the fact that the state has a \$1-a-year lease with Michigan State University for the Harrison Road headquarters that runs through 2030.

State officials say that misses the point that the building is in serious disrepair.

"The infrastructure is dilapidated and outdated and antiquated," Woods said. "We're talking about the electrical, the plumbing, the heating and cooling system, and the roofing."

According to a state analysis, the new State Police arrangement would cost about \$6 million more than the current one over an 11-year period.

But the 11-year analysis is questionable because it includes two years - this year and next - when there are no costs to the state for the new building because they don't have it yet.

Factor those out, and the cost gap balloons to \$13.6 million.

Location questioned

Jones and state Rep. Mark Meadows, D-East Lansing, both question the location. Meadows thinks there is no need to move from the Harrison Road headquarters, which is in his district. Jones says there's plenty of state-owned land for a headquarters at the State Secondary Complex, which is in his district.

Part of the state's rationale for moving the headquarters downtown is a Granholm directive that seeks to reduce urban sprawl and support urban centers.

Meadows says that moving jobs from East Lansing to Lansing just shifts them from one urban area to another.

"The problem is, you rob Peter to pay Paul," Meadows said. "You're taking the jobs from one area that relies on those jobs and putting them in another area."

Said Woods: "We do not view the campus as an urban area."

Ferguson said he believes much of the resistance comes from State Police employees who don't like the idea of paying city income taxes and paying for parking in Lansing.

Legislative action

Jones' bill to block the project has 51 co-sponsors.

But it's not at all clear that the Legislature could undo the deal at this stage even if it wanted to.

The contract includes a clause that allows the state to cancel the lease if the Legislature fails to appropriate money for the rent. But the Michigan Constitution prohibits the Legislature from passing laws impairing contract obligations.

"We think it provides a performance obligation on the part of the developer and a payment obligation on the part of the state," Granger said.

Senate Republican spokesman Matt Marsden said Senate legal staff have indicated the contract might be ironclad.

Meadows, who worked in the Attorney General's Office before he was elected to the House, disagrees.

"As an old government attorney, I can tell you it's hard for anybody to rely on a contract with the government," he said. "I don't think it's a done deal."

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or candrews@lsj.com.

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